

Hobbies

Finding a blue back on a greenback is no cause for collectors' delight

By Roger Boye

Today's column answers more questions about coins and paper money.

Q—I own a \$5 bill that's blue on the back side, not green. How much might this printing error be worth?

B. M., Chicago

A—Just \$5, the bill's face value.

The green ink on U. S. paper money has yellow and blue com-

ponents, and tricksters have discovered that certain acids will create a "blue back" by destroying the yellow ink. Similarly, some alkalis will produce a "yellow back" by destroying the blue ink. Experts say that Uncle Sam has yet to produce a Federal Reserve note with the wrong-color ink.

Q—Last November I paid \$445 to a mail-order dealer for a rare coin that failed to "live up" to the advertisement. I've written

to the dealer twice without getting a refund. How can I get my money back?

H. J., Elgin

A—First, try writing to the publication that carried the advertisement. Some hobby magazines may intercede on your behalf if you include copies of correspondence with the dealer. If that fails, remember that several coin-collector organizations—such as the American Numismatic Association—will try to help

you if the dealer is a member.

Finally, the Federal Trade Commission recommends contacting the Better Business Bureau in the city where the dealer is located, the attorney general's office in the dealer's state, a U. S. Postal Service inspector or the FTC itself (write to Rare Coins, Federal Trade Commission, Sixth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue N. W., Washington, D.C. 20580).

Q—I believe my 1914-D "walking Liberty half dollar" is a great rarity because no such coins were supposed to have been made before 1916. What do you think?

V. R., Chicago

A—The coin's a fake. Uncle Sam selected the "walking Liberty" design in early 1916 and the first specimens were struck mid-year. Your coin must be an "altered date," most likely from a 1944 "walking Liberty" half. Someone simply etched a "1"

out of the first "4."

Q—Our grandfather left us six \$20 gold pieces made in the early 1900s. Do any of them have great value?

W. P., Rockford

A—The answer depends on the dates, mint marks and condition of your coins. One variety of the 1907 \$20 gold piece designed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens has sold at auction for \$220,000.

Most of the other coins retail for \$450 or up, in part because the so-called "double Eagles" contain nearly one troy ounce of gold. Uncle Sam last made such coins in 1933.

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Questions about coins or currency? Send them to Roger Boye, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply and allow at least three weeks for the answer.